

LOCALISM COMMENTS OF WRAT/WJRZ (Greater Media New Jersey)

A. INTRODUCTION

WRAT-FM (95.9 The Rat) is a rock station licensed to Pt. Pleasant, New Jersey. WJRZ-FM (Oldies 100) is an oldies station licensed to Manahawkin, New Jersey. Both stations serve the population of Ocean and Monmouth counties, and we strive to provide programming that is responsive to the unique interests and needs of our communities. Our comments below address some of the specific issues raised in the Commission's Notice of Inquiry.

B. COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WRAT runs a weekly thirty-minute, pre-recorded program called "Viewpoints," which is geared toward helping listeners with their everyday living. The program includes interviews with various experts and covers topics such as talking with your kids about sex, managing money, and how to avoid cursing around the house. The station also runs local news reports five times each morning, Monday through Friday. Each newscast is approximately three minutes long. Due to our location at the Jersey Shore, weather reports are an integral part of our programming and increase in frequency when any major storms threaten the Monmouth-Ocean area.

WJRZ airs three to five local public affairs interviews per week, approximately four to five minutes in length, on weekday mornings at 7:40 or 8:40. Recent topics included detecting and preventing skin cancer, Jackson and Brick Township's "Night out against Crime," the American Red Cross "Rock and Ride Bike Tour" on Long Beach Island, and the Ocean County Health Department's "Pretty in Pink" Day in support of the fight against Breast Cancer.

Our stations broadcast news reports regularly during morning drive. WJRZ employs a full time news director/air personality who broadcasts 35 local newscasts per week, 7 per day. News reports are approximately four minutes long. Station management and on-air personnel regularly monitor a number of news sources for topics of importance and for breaking news. For example, at WJRZ, the news department creates a weekly datebook of local newspaper clippings and faxes from civic and charitable organizations to determine the types of interviews and programs that it will air.

Our traffic reports provide listeners with the latest information on accidents, road hazards and slowdowns, and offer alternative routes around problem areas. Each report covers major transportation routes in and around the Monmouth-Ocean areas. Traffic reports occur frequently during the peak morning drive hours and regularly during afternoon drive as well.

Our stations air dozens of public service announcements (PSAs) each week. WJRZ airs approximately 20 different PSAs each week in equal rotation, once per hour in morning drive and once per daypart during the rest of the day. PSAs are chosen from faxes and mail received from the community as a result of daily on-air solicitation. PSA topics include health screenings, blood drives, and community fund raising. The announcements are also posted on the station website. The morning newscaster on WRAT promotes a local charitable or community event before each newscast, for approximately five live mentions per day, five times per week. Topics include local blood drives, food collections, benefits for those with serious or life threatening ailments, and voter registration campaigns. All items are also included on the WRAT website's "PSA Page".

WJRZ also does live broadcasts from numerous civic and fundraising events, including the Ocean County Fair, Toms River Business Improvement District Car Cruises, Toms River/Ocean County Founders Day, Stafford Township Cops and Kids Nites, Dover Township's Municipal Alliance Vest-A-Cop, the Toms River Rotary Sailfest, and the Brick Morning Rotary 5K Run.

C. EMERGENCY PROGRAMMING

WRAT is proud to participate in our local EAS program. WRAT is the only fully staffed, round-the-clock radio station in Monmouth and Ocean counties. For this reason, the local nuclear power plant, the Oyster Creek facility, uses WRAT as its first contact in case of emergency. WRAT routinely participates in local drills and tests of the Oyster Creek emergency system. Other radio and television stations monitor WRAT-FM for this information. WRAT works directly with the New Jersey State Police Office of Emergency Management to insure that this system is operational. Additionally, WRAT participates in the AMBER ALERT program.

WJRZ provides school closing information during inclement weather for Ocean and Monmouth counties, with updates every 15 minutes as needed, and similar information posted on the station website. WJRZ also employs a full time local meteorologist. It also participates in AMBER alerts and EAS as a local primary (LP) station.

D. CREATION AND SELECTION OF PROGRAMMING

Our stations use their station websites as a source of communication with and feedback from listeners. WRAT gathers programming suggestions from the community via the "Contact Us" portion of the station website, which includes links to the promotions and marketing department and the programming department. Listener suggestions often translate to the airwaves in the form of requests and dedications or local PSAs. WJRZ employees are members of the local Chambers of Commerce and attend various meeting and events to gain greater insight into community interests and needs.

WRAT is the only station in its listening area to feature local music by local musicians on a regular basis through a broadcast program called "Jersey Rock," which airs Monday through Thursday nights at 8:30 p.m. Listeners are encouraged to view the schedule of artists on a special dedicated page on the station website. Local music is accepted by compact disc submissions or MP3 submissions to the host of the program.

We also look forward to capitalizing on the power of digital radio and the internet to provide opportunities to broaden our programming offerings and serve a wider audience. Digital radio offers the potential to broadcast on subchannels, on which alternative programming could be aired. The internet provides limitless opportunities to stream alternative programming, although the current CARP rulings make web streaming somewhat cost-prohibitive, particularly for experimental formats.

E. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Greater Media New Jersey is a firm believer that our public interest obligations do not begin and end with our programming activities. Each of our stations is an active participant in its local community, particularly with respect to sponsoring local fundraisers and bringing attention to issues of local concern and importance.

The Rat is deeply involved in several non-profit events every year. For example:

§ WRAT (and WJRZ) are participating media sponsors for the Multiple Sclerosis Society's Walk-a-Thon and Bike-a-Thon, the MDA Bike-a-Thon, the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, the American Red Cross Rock-n-Ride, and the Scleroderma Foundation Walk-A-Thon. WRAT has a race named after it called "The Rat Race" to benefit the Family Resource Associates, which provides clothing for those in need.

§ We work closely with the LADACIN Network (formerly Cerebral Palsy of Monmouth and Ocean Counties; this organization raises money for local kids and adults with Cerebral Palsy) on several events each year. The first one is the Rosebud Gala, a black-tie affair for which our Promotion Director is on the board. The Rat also coordinates and hosts the Rat Rock Open, a charity golf outing to help raise money for the LADACIN Network.

§ For the last four years, the Rat has conducted the Broadcast for the People of New Jersey, a fundraising drive formulated by Operations Manager Carl Craft where, starting at 6 a.m., we conduct a live broadcast from a 44-foot tractor trailer parked outside a sponsor location. Our goal is to stay there until the truck is filled with used clothing for Family Resource Associates, non-perishable food items for the Monmouth Ocean Food Bank, and stocking stuffer items for the Holiday Express. Each year, we fill the truck in two days.

§ The station gives several tours of the radio station to Girl and Boy Scouts of all ages.

WRAT also makes donations to high school teams when requested for fund raisers they conduct, and gets involved with many local events in the area such as the Monmouth County Fair, the New Jersey Seafood Festival, the Festival of the Sea in Point Pleasant, the Belmar Fall Festival put on by the Chamber of Commerce (Promotions Director Doug Sjonvall is also on the board of directors), the Freehold and Toms River Halloween Parades, the Brick Memorial Day Parade and the Belmar and the Seaside St. Patrick's Day Parades. We make donations to the local Police and Fire Departments for their fundraisers as well. We are also involved with local sporting events, including the Lakewood Blueclaws baseball team and the New Jersey Devils. We broadcast live from select Blueclaws and Devils games throughout the season and have representatives from each team on the morning show as well.

Similarly, WJRZ is regularly involved in a number of local and national charitable causes, such as:

§ Oldies 100 WJRZ Share The Joy, an annual live two-day radiothon benefiting a number of local and national charities, including Ocean County Hunger Relief, Children's Specialized Hospitals, Toys For Tots, the National Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation, and the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

§ "Kops & Kids Nites" at a local Pizza Hut in Ocean County, New Jersey, with the station providing prizes, live entertainment, and live broadcasts, and all tips and donations going to the Stafford Municipal Alliance to help fund drug and alcohol awareness in local schools.

§ Three WJRZ employees provide volunteer services to Stafford Township, including our Business/Traffic Manager, who serves on the Stafford Municipal Alliance to assist various community and school projects, and our Chief Engineer and Production/IT Manager, who help maintain emergency communications at the Stafford Emergency Operations Center.

§ The Emergency Service Camporee, in which WJRZ hosted local Boy Scouts at its Waretown tower site and invited local kids to participate in various demonstrations on safety, survival and outdoor activities.

§ WJRZ dedicated a full day of programming to the Cerebral Palsy Radiothon to raise funds for the Lehman School.

§ American Cancer Society Relay For Life, a 2-day event to raise money and awareness at Southern Regional High School. WJRZ's morning team hosted commencement and closing Ceremonies.

§ Scleroderma Foundation Walk, for which WJRZ provided entertainment and talent, and also hosted the awards ceremony.

§ NJPPC Shore Dreams for Kids, which offered a day at the beach for underprivileged kids and included music, games and giveaways.

§ NJ Vietnam Vets Motorcycle Show, a live appearance and two-hour broadcast to help raise funds for various veterans' programs.

§ Sailfest 2003, a day-long event to raise funds for educational, recreational and scholarship programs coordinated by the Toms River Rotary Club. WJRZ provided a live two-hour remote broadcast.

§ Brick Morning Rotary 5K Run, a fundraising event with proceeds going to local educational programs.

A number of WJRZ's staff members hold assigned positions with the following charities: The Ladicin Network, Toms River Rotary Club, Toms River Ocean County Chamber of Commerce, Brick Township Chamber of Commerce, Southern Monmouth County Chamber of Commerce, and United Way of Monmouth County.

It is rewarding to know that WRAT and WJRZ have the capacity to work closely with charitable causes to benefit our communities. Our radio stations are truly local businesses, and we are an integral part of the communities where we operate. We are proud of our ongoing commitment to localism and the endless generosity of our employees and listeners in giving back to their communities.

F. CONCLUSION

As demonstrated above, each of our stations devotes a substantial portion of its air time, financial resources, and outreach efforts to (1) creating an ongoing dialogue with listeners and the general public and (2) using that dialogue to create programming and community events that serve the public interest and address the issues that are most important to each community. We take our public interest obligations very seriously, and we are proud of the service we provide to the Monmouth-Ocean communities.